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ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP

RED OR BLACK TO CHANGE OF HOTEL, IT'S ALL HAPPENING IN AHMEDABAD

India, who lost the last match against South Africa & 2023 ODI World Cup final to Aussies, are not taking any chances for T20 World Cup final

DIVINE INTERVENTION AND FOCUS ON SOIL

Two days before India took on England in semis in Mumbai, the team deferred its training session by an hour due to Lunar Eclipse. Now, the team has changed the hotel in Ahmedabad ahead of the final. The team had stayed in a different hotel previously. The Motera strip is made of three soils — red, black and a mixture. India might not go for black this time

RICKY MARTIN IN THE HOUSE FOR FINAL

- Puerto Rican Grammy award-winning singer Ricky Martin will be the star performer before T20 WC final on Sunday. Falguni Pathak and Bollywood playback singer Sukhwinder Singh too will be part of it
- With airfares soaring, Western and Central Railways to operate several special trains to facilitate travel to Ahmedabad | P19

1,00,000

THE NUMBER OF SPECTATORS EXPECTED AT THE STADIUM

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

adani INDULGE

THE SUNDAY STANDARD

DEVI AWARDS

EVENT XPRESS

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS GROUP

WELCOME BACK TO THE CITY OF DEVIS

March 7 2026 | 6 pm | Raajkutir, Kolkata - IHCL SeleQtions

Prosenjit Chatterjee, Actor, Padmashri Awardee will be presenting the awards

தினமணி

Presenting Partner adani

Luxury Mobility Partner VOLVO | Silver Partner

Associate Partners Peerless HOTELS & RESORTS | JM Financial

Celebration Partner Radico SPIRIT OF EXCELLENCE | Hospitality Partner Raajkutir

● SIDDU PRESENTS RECORD 17TH BUDGET ● OUTLAY OF RS 4.48 LAKH CRORE ● CREATES ROOM FOR RAISING RS 1.32 LAKH CR LOANS....

DEVPT-POPULISM BALANCING ACT AMID FINANCIAL STRAIN

DECODED K'TAKA BUDGET 2026-27

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI @Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah, presenting his record 17th budget as finance minister for 2026-27 in the Assembly on Friday, made a prudent move, striking a balance between development and populist welfare schemes, with the five guarantees continuing to get a high allocation of Rs 51,286 crore.

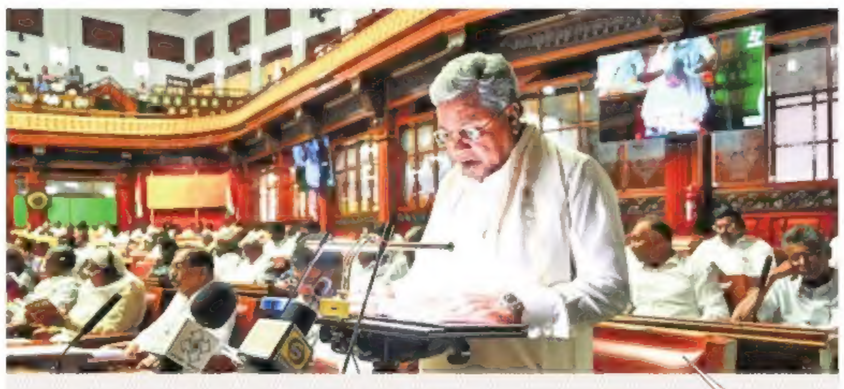
To raise money for his budget, he revised upward revenue target for the sectors – including the lucrative excise – and created room for raising loans within the framework of Karnataka Fiscal Responsibility Act (KFRA) 2002 by projecting the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) at Rs 33,05,500 crore.

Announcements, such as financial assistance of Rs 5,000 for Vaishnodevi pilgrims with an allocation of Rs 5 crore and construction of a new choultry in Varanasi, revealed an attempt to shed Siddaramaiah's "minority appeasement" image, and the proposal to ban social media for children below 16 years of age showcased a novelty.

Reducing sales tax on environmentally friendly Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) from 14.34% to 5% to promote its use in industrial and transport sectors seems to be a breakthrough for the sector. He said the Alcohol-in-Beverage (AIB)-based excise duty structure – a global gold-standard for alcohol taxation – will be implemented from April as it directly targets the alcohol content which is the primary source of negative externalities.

The excise duty structure will be uniform, and additional excise duty will be imposed within specified limits based on ex-factory price lists, ensuring gradual price changes rather than sudden fluctuations, he explained. Besides, the existing 16 excise slabs will be reduced to eight.

Allocation of Rs 4,291 crore to address regional imbalance based on the Prof M Govinda Rao Committee report, Rs 5,000 crore against the action plan for Kalyana Karnataka development, and Rs 7,000 crore for Bengaluru are likely to give a fillip to infrastructure development in the state. P4



IN A NUTSHELL

BUDGET HEADS	2025-26	2026-27	HIKE
Size	₹4,09,549cr	₹4,48,004cr	₹38,455cr (9.4%)
Revenue receipts	₹2,92,477	₹3,15,050	₹22,573cr (7.7%)
Capital receipts	₹1,16,170cr	₹1,32,190cr	₹16,020cr (13.8%)
Revenue expenditure	₹3,11,739cr	₹3,38,007cr	₹26,268cr (8.4%)
Capital expenditure	₹83,200cr	₹84,567cr	₹1,367cr (1.6%)
Loan repayment	₹26,474cr	₹35,316cr	₹8,842cr (33.4%)
Fiscal deficit	₹90,428cr	₹97,449cr	----
Revenue deficit	₹19,262cr	₹22,957cr	----
Outstanding liabilities	₹7,64,655cr	₹8,24,389cr	----
GSDP	₹30,70,103cr	₹33,05,500cr	----
Fiscal deficit	2.95%	2.95%	----
Revenue deficit	0.63%	0.69%	----

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah presents his 17th budget at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Friday | EXPRESS

This year, the Union government's fiscal deficit is 4.4%, and the Centre has a debt of Rs 218 lakh crore. No country or state can develop without borrowing

Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister

Karnataka is heading toward an economic precipice. Siddaramaiah's 17th budget resembles a clerical exercise rather than a comprehensive policy roadmap for the state. It relies on flowery language without presenting substantive policy direction

BY Vijayendra, state BJP chief

₹18,963cr TO MAKE B'LURU 'LIVEABLE'

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah set aside Rs 7,000-cr for infra development, Rs 5,000-cr to tackle flooding and Rs 6,939 crore for Cauvery 6th Stage to turn Bengaluru into the 'world's most liveable city' | P2

Social media ban for kids proposed, but SOPs not out

RASHMI PATIL @Bengaluru

THE Karnataka government, in its budget on Friday, proposed banning the use of social media for children under 16 years of age, with the objective of preventing adverse effects of increasing mobile use on children. Karnataka has become the first state in the country to announce the significant move.

Earlier, Andhra Pradesh too had stated that it would make a move similar to countries like Australia and France that approved bills to ban children under 15 from using social media.

Though the state government made the announcement, it did not lay out any Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) or roadmap on who will monitor the children, whether they will be punished for violating the ban etc. While parents and schools are clueless, child rights activists and psychiatrists warn of the implications of this sudden ban.

Shashi Kumar D, General Secretary, Associated Managements of Primary & Secondary Schools in Karnataka, said, "We welcome this move by the state government, but there has to be a systematic road map and SOPs to implement it. To see it implemented soon, they must release SOPs quickly."

Nagaraj Angadi, a parent whose kid is studying UKG, said, "It is difficult to monitor children on their use of social media. They might enter fake age or date of birth to create IDs on these platforms. Our children also get assignments and homework through WhatsApp. In such cases, it becomes inevitable to give them the mobile."

Dr Manoj Sharma, Head for SHUT clinic (Service for Healthy Use of Technology), NIMHANS, said, "Ban or no ban is a government decision. However, all the stakeholders need to make children understand that reduction or no use of mobile or social media can benefit them. The lifestyle of the entire family has to be changed. More offline and physical activities must be encouraged. There must be digital fasting practised once a week."

He revealed that Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) among children will led to sleep deprivation, anxiety and depression. P6

INSIDE BIG BET ON KARNATAKA'S PUBLIC TRANSPORT | P2 | NO STATE CAN GROW SANS LOANS, SAYS CM | P4 | ₹44,632 CR FOR SC/ST SUB-PLANS | P5 | SIDDU WOOS WOMEN ONCE AGAIN | P6

30-DAY U.S. 'WAIVER' FOR INDIA TO BUY STRANDED RUSSIAN OIL

RAKESH KUMAR @New Delhi

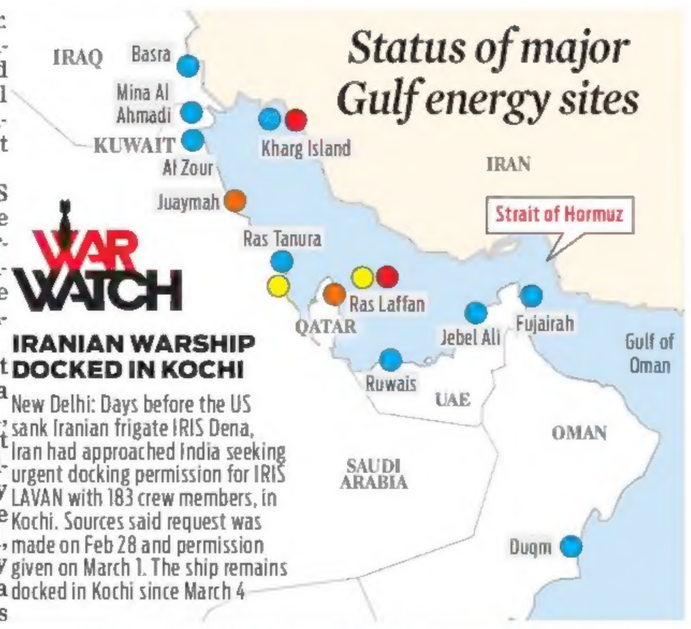
WITH the Iran-Israel/US war starting to impact crude supply and setting prices on fire, the US on Friday said it would issue a 30-day waiver for Indian refiners to buy Russian oil stranded at sea. The Strait of Hormuz, the crucial chokepoint through which 20% of global oil and gas shipments pass through, is currently under threat due to the war.

Announcing the decision, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the temporary waiver is to ensure oil continues to flow into global markets.

The announcement, however, kicked off a political storm in India with the opposition parties questioning how the US can decide where India should buy from, accusing the Narendra Modi-led government of "surrendering" the country's sovereignty to a foreign power. Government sources, meanwhile, clarified that India had not stopped buying Russian oil despite US overtures. In February, Russia was India's largest crude oil supplier.

Sources said despite the US waiver, Indian refiners are seeking a legal opinion on purchasing the Russian oil stranded at sea, which may include shipments from sanctioned entities and vessels.

"So far, refiners have bought only non-sanctioned oil," said a petroleum ministry official, adding that oil companies want to avoid complications including payment problems if they buy sanctioned oil. After the Russia-Ukraine war started, New Delhi had consistently raised purchases from Russia from 0.2% of total oil imports in December 2021 to as much as 40% in July 2025. P14



IRANIAN WARSHIP DOCKED IN KOCHI

New Delhi: Days before the US sank Iranian frigate IRIS Dena, Iran had approached India seeking urgent docking permission for IRIS LAVAN with 183 crew members, in Kochi. Sources said request was made on Feb 28 and permission given on March 1. The ship remains docked in Kochi since March 4

Govt invokes ESMA, asks OMCs to raise LPG output

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @New Delhi

THE Centre on Friday invoked its rarely used emergency powers to direct all oil refiners operating in India to ramp up LPG production in view of supply disruptions due to the ongoing war in West Asia.

As much as 85% of India's LPG imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz, which is now effectively closed. To ensure seamless supply of cooking gas, the government issued an order under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 (ESMA) asking refiners to maximise LPG production and supply it only to the three state-owned oil marketing companies (OMCs) — Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation, and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation. The order further stated that refiners must use all available propane and butane to produce LPG and should not use the two chemicals to make petrochemical products or other downstream derivatives.

"All Public sector OMCs shall ensure that LPG so procured is supplied/marketed solely to consumers of domestic LPG only," the order read.

Rapper-politico Balen on Nepal landslide course

JAYANTH JACOB @New Delhi

RAPPER-turned-politician Balendra Shah's Rastriya Swatantra Party is on course for a historic landslide in Nepal's first post-Gen Z protest general elections, toppling decades of dominance by the Nepali Congress and CPN-UML (Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist).

Shah, 35, a former mayor of Kathmandu, joined the three-year-old RSP in January as its prime ministerial candidate.

Early counting trends from the Election Commission, covering 144 of 165 constituencies, show the RSP has already won three seats and is leading in 104 others.

By contrast, the Nepali Congress has secured two seats and leads in 12, while the CPN-UML leads in 10 constituencies. In its manifesto, Shah's RSP promised bold economic and social reforms, pledging to create 1.2 million jobs, curb forced migration, and double Nepal's per capita income from $1,447 to $3,000 within five years. The party also vowed to expand the national GDP to $100 billion and provide universal healthcare insurance.

Voter turnout reached approximately 60%, reflecting strong engagement in a politically fragile nation that has seen 14 governments in 18 years. The RSP's dominance is evident in Kathmandu, where it leads in all 10 constituencies. Shah was leading in Jhapa-5 against four-time prime minister Oli, securing 6,551 votes to Oli's 1,428. Other RSP victories include Ranju Darshana in Kathmandu-1 with 15,455 votes.

Balendra Shah

India bullish on new govt

India, through foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, said, "We look forward to working with the new Government of Nepal to build on the robust ties between our two countries and peoples for mutual benefit"

Top choice in Gen Z protest

Balendra was a popular choice to lead the interim government after Gen Z youths toppled the Oli-led coalition government in September last year. But Balen declined, saying he would rather contest the parliamentary elections for a full term

Polluting industries make villagers plead for 'mercy death'

RAGHOTTAM KOPPAR @Koppal

IN Hirebaganal, villagers are gasping for breath. They allege pollution from the industrial units located in the vicinity has made them chronic respiratory patients. Almost all homes here are using nebulisers. During a recent gram sabha held in Koppal the villagers raised the issue with Deputy Commissioner Suresh Itnal and MLA Raghavendra Hitnal. The villagers pleaded with them for mercy death since the conditions, according to them, are unliveable.

Some of them showed the MLA and the DC how black ash coat their house walls, plants and other areas. The villagers said that despite numerous pleas with environment officers, there has been no crackdown on polluting industries. Mahesh, a villager, said, "We request you to grant us mercy death as everyone is suffering from one or other disease."

Hirebaganal is not alone in this plight. Surrounding villages in Koppal too are battling pollution. The villagers had held protests last year. Over the last year several people have left these villages. The DC said the administration has issued notices to five industries to close down apart from the notices served by the environment department to two industries.